

Gardener's Corner

May 2025

May is here—time to begin gardening in earnest. Given the amount of rain we had in April, our gardens should be beautiful. Although my perennials are growing well, the rain has also increased the weeds! There is so much to do before planting new flowers and vegetables.

There are many tasks and tips for this month from the **Missouri Botanical Garden**—here are just a few. If you grow spring bulbs, wait until the foliage has yellowed or is dead to move or divide them. Prematurely removing spring bulb foliage will cause next year's flower production to decline. Non-hardy bulbs including gladiolus, caladiums, dahlias, canna and elephant ears can be planted as soon as the ground warms and the temperature at night consistently reaches 50°F. Fertilize azaleas after they bloom.

Traditionally, Mother's Day is considered a safe time to plant warm season plants. If you have mums in the garden, now is the time to punch them back to promote bushy growth. Such plants as penstemon, monarda, and asters that are prone to drooping over before they bloom should be pruned. Warm-season crops like edamame, eggplant, okra, pepper, sweet corn, sweet potato, and tomato can be planted as the ground around mid-May when the ground is warmer. Also, warm season vegetables can be directly sown into the ground at this time. These include basil, cucumber, melon, pumpkin, summer squash, and winter squash. Once the nights remain above 50°F, houseplants can be taken outside where most prefer bright and indirect light, or direct morning sun.

And now a word about our helpful insects, particularly butterflies and bees. While this column can't delve into the subject in great deal, there are some articles which might give you some insight about pollinators and how to bring more into your garden. One basic article about butterflies as pollinators is entitled *Are Butterflies Pollinators? How they Help Your Yard*. It can be found at: <https://birdsandwild.com/are-butterflies-pollinators/>. Another article, specifically on monarch butterflies, is from the **University of Missouri Extension**, <https://extension.missouri.edu/news/gardening-can-protect-monarch-butterflies>. Also, there are several interesting articles on plants that attract monarch butterflies at **The Spruce**, <https://www.thespruce.com/search?q=monarch+butterflies>. An article from the **Washington State Department of Agriculture** discusses protecting bees from pesticides: <https://agr.wa.gov/getmedia/6144c435-c1ad-4092-afe3-436bdd627e41/388-tenwaysstopprotectbeesfrompesticides.pdf>. The Save the Bee website has lots of information about bees, <https://savethebee.org/>. as does the **Buzz About Bees** website, <https://www.buzzaboutbees.net/10-Reasons-Why-Bees-Are-Important.html>. Finally, more scholarly publication, entitled *Why bees are critical for achieving sustainable development* was published by **Ambio: A Journal of Environment and Society** and is available from the **National Institutes of Health**, at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7708548/>.

Some virtual and in person programs of interest in May are the following:

The **Smithsonian Gardens** has *A Natural History Approach to Protecting Pollinators* video in its Let's Talk Garden Series. You can find it at: <https://gardens.si.edu/learn/lets-talk-gardens-video-library/natural-history-approach-to-protecting-pollinators/>

May 20, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30. The **University of Illinois Extension's Four Season Gardening Webinar Series** will present *Managing Common Squash and Pumpkin Pests*. You can register at: <https://registration.extension.illinois.edu/start/four-seasons-gardening-webinar-common-squash-and-pumpkin-pests-and-how-to-manage-them-may-20>

On Saturday, May 17 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There is a *Plant America Garden Expo* at the **Weldon Spring Site Interpretive Center**, 7295 Missouri 94 Saint Charles, MO 63304. Find out more about it at: <https://www.upcomingevents.com/st-louis/events/weldon-spring-site-interpretive-center/plant-america-garden-expo2025-408152>